UNITED NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/46/471
24 September 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Forty-sixth session
Agenda item 97 (b)

REPORT OF THE UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES, QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS AND HUMANITARIAN QUESTIONS: QUESTIONS RELATING TO REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PERSONS

Assistance to refugees in Somalia

Report of the Secretary-General

CONTENTS

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	INTRODUCTION	1 - 4	2
II.	BACKGROUND	5 - 6	2
III.	REPLIES RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES	7	3
IV.	REPLIES RECEIVED FROM ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM	8 - 28	3

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 45/154 of 18 December 1990, entitled "Assistance to refugees in Somalia", the General Assembly called upon the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP) to resume their assistance programmes for the refugees in the north-west districts of Somalia as soon as possible. It also requested the Secretary-General, in close cooperation with UNHCR, WFP and the donor community, to resume the Interim Assistance Programme so as to ensure that essential food and other humanitarian supplies continued to reach the refugee settlements in the north-west districts of Somalia until such time as a more permanent arrangement could be made.

2. The General Assembly appealed to Member States, international organizations and voluntary agencies to render maximum and timely material, financial and technical assistance to enable the Government of Somalia to implement the projects and activities identified in the report of the 1987 inter-agency mission (A/42/645, annex) as the basis for a comprehensive programme of action combining both humanitarian and developmental needs related to refugees.

3. The General Assembly also requested the pertinent organizations of the United Nations system, namely the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and WFP, to prepare, in consultation with the Government of Somalia, detailed project documentation for the implementation of those project activities identified in the report of the Secretary-General (ibid., paras. 55-66) as priority endeavours for a comprehensive programme of action.

4. Member States and the pertinent United Nations organizations were invited to provide information on actions they had taken in implementation of resolution 45/154. The responses received are summarized in sections III and IV of the present report.

II. BACKGROUND

5. The problem of refugees in Somalia dates back approximately 10 years. At the beginning of 1982, the Government of Somalia and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees agreed on a planning figure of 700,000 refugees. From the last quarter of 1984 to mid-1986, new refugees from the Ogaden region of Ethiopia arrived in the north-western region in an influx which, according to Government estimates, totalled 140,000 persons. An agreement was signed at the time with the Government of Somalia covering the re-enumeration of refugees in Somalia.

6. With a faltering economy troubled by numerous shortcomings, predominant among which is the dependence on livestock production and exports by a largely

nomadic population, Somalia has been ill equipped to contend with an ever-increasing refugee problem. The fragile public services and infrastructure are unable to bear the heavy burden of the presence of refugees who have heretofore declined voluntary repatriation. Although Somalia has always received special assistance to cope with the emergency needs of refugees, this has not been adequate to defray the social and economic cost to Somalia.

III. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES

Japan

7. The Government of Japan, in response to the UNHCR appeal of 18 March 1991 for financial support to its activities in favour of the Ethiopian returnees in Somalia and Somali refugees in Ethiopia, decided to contribute to UNHCR on 26 March 1991 the sum of 1,100,003,350 yen (equivalent to $US 8,117,150).

IV. REPLIES RECEIVED FROM ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

A. Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

8. All of the refugees in Somalia were of Ethiopian origin. The vast majority were ethnic Somali pastoral nomads whose areas of origin are Dire Dawa, east and western Hararghe, Ogaden, Bale and Borena. In southern Somalia, assistance was provided to refugees living in 29 camps in the Lugh, Gedo and Lower Shabelle regions. There were 12 camps located in the north-west, but during 1988-1989 there were significant population shifts resulting in the concentration of displaced refugees in and around Boroma town.

9. The planning figure for refugees in Somalia was 600,000 in 1990, including 460,000 in the south. In the north-west, the reduced planning figure of 140,000 corresponds to UNHCR/WFP estimates of beneficiaries, which took into account the results of a partial registration of the camps in the north-west in March 1989. Planning for 1991 care and maintenance requirements for southern Somalia was based on the same number of beneficiaries in 1990.

10. The assistance programme in southern Somalia is of an on-going nature pending implementation of the Special Programme for a Durable Solution as outlined in the previous report. Sectoral activities in health, education and water were actively pursued in 1990 in spite of the precarious security situation in the country. Care and maintenance food deliveries were made with only occasional interruption or delays as a result of circumstances usually beyond the control of the refugee assistance programme.

11. The organized voluntary repatriation programme from the Gedo region, which began in December 1986, continued on a regular basis in 1990 despite the difficulties faced. Since 1986, a total of 20,886 persons have been assisted to repatriate under UNHCR auspices, of whom 8,857 were repatriated in 1990. In late 1990, funds were made available for implementation of local integration for some 38,500 refugees who had registered for local integration in Qorioley. In spite of the security situation in-country at that time, UNHCR made all efforts to implement the project but owing to the non-agreement of implementation modalities between UNHCR and the Government of Somalia and the further deterioration of the security situation, implementation of projects became impossible. UNHCR had to cease all operations in southern Somalia due to fighting in the region and ultimately evacuated all its staff from the country in January 1991.

12. Since the suspension of the UNHCR/WFP programme in the north-west at the end of August 1989, UNHCR involvement was only on a "good offices" basis in the Extraordinary Interim Emergency Programme on the request of the Secretary-General. That Programme ended in August 1990. UNHCR, jointly with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), also assisted 4,375 refugees in the north-west who had applied for voluntary repatriation to Ethiopia in 1990.

13. At the time of preparing this report, UNHCR is in the process of finalizing an emergency assistance programme to assist in the reintegration of Somali refugees who were living in the refugee camps located in eastern Ethiopia and who have recently returned to north-west Somalia. Due to favourable conditions now existing for the voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees from eastern Ethiopia to north-west Somalia, the prospect of a durable solution for this large group of refugees in Ethiopia appears within reach. For this to become a reality, the inception of a rehabilitation programme is urgently required to assist these needy persons. Failure to do so would only lead to a long-term care and maintenance programme.

14. The movement of Somali refugees back to Somalia has already started and UNHCR is fully committed to assist in the implementation of a reintegration programme, and it is in this context that UNHCR and a CARE assessment team in north-west Somalia is actively involved in the setting up of a logistics and distribution system.

B. World Food Programme

15. Following the termination of the Extraordinary Interim Emergency Programme at end of August 1990, relief activities in favour of refugees and displaced persons in north-western Somalia were assumed by ICRC albeit on a limited scale. In view of the deteriorating security conditions in north-western Somalia, the Government of Somalia was requested by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to conclude an agreement with ICRC for an expanded role in the area. No response was received and the ICRC role, particularly in food aid distribution, was further diminished following the killing of an ICRC official in the area.

16. WFP continued its food assistance to some 600,000 refugees in the south of the country in the face of escalating civil hostilities. Food convoys to the refugee camps were thus sporadic and mounted under heavy military escort when security conditions permitted. WFP staff were evacuated from the Hiran region, host to some 250,000 refugees, following the looting of WFP facilities in late October 1990.

17. Refugees who managed to move to relatively safe areas in and around Mogadiscio in late 1990 were assisted along with vulnerable Somali nationals in the area. The heavy fighting which led to the collapse of the Government of Somalia in late December 1990 resulted in the looting of WFP food aid stocks as well as facilities and property in Mogadiscio, and the evacuation of all United Nations staff from the country. The chaotic situation ensuing since that time and the complete breakdown of law and order made it impossible to re-establish operations in Somalia until August 1991.

18. The civil war in Somalia has caused an outpouring of Somali nationals to neighbouring countries as well as the spontaneous return of Ethiopian refugees from Somalia to Ethiopia. WFP is providing assistance to some 760,000 Somali refugees in Djibouti, Kenya and Ethiopia, in addition to 200,000 returnees in Ethiopia.

19. WFP continues to make efforts to provide assistance in cooperation with non-governmental organizations having programmes in various areas of Somalia, but security conditions and logistical constraints offer limited opportunity for large-scale interventions at the present time.

C. United Nations Children's Fund

20. UNICEF consultants had trained rural health unit staff in nutrition surveillance and methodology for targeting the refugee supplementary feeding programme. Oral rehydration therapy activities have also been strengthened in the three major camps. In Damuq camps A, B and C, UNICEF assisted the Ministry of Health in the provision and distribution of iron/folic acid tablets to refugee women, 60 per cent of whom were suffering from nutritional anaemia. In addition, 15 maternal-child health kits, essential drugs and traditional birth attendant kits were provided to the rural health units. Child health workers were empowered with technical skills to monitor the nutritional status of refugee mothers and children.

21. As regards water supply and sanitation for the refugee population in Boroma, UNICEF has worked with the Refugee Water Unit, inspecting and cleaning the water tanks and reservoirs in the above three camps. UNICEF also has provided a design of ventilated pit latrines. Four such latrines were started.

D. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

22. FAO, through the monthly publications of its Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), continues to report to the international community on the plight of the refugee population in Somalia.

23. Owing to the recent intensification of civil unrest in Somalia, the consequent return of refugees to Ethiopia and Kenya and the inability to systematically evaluate conditions in the country, FAO has not initiated new activities.

E. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

24. In 1990 UNESCO fielded a mission to Somalia jointly with the OPEC Fund to appraise the country's needs in primary school construction and rehabilitation of basic educational services. While the focus was not on refugee assistance, the mission also included the assessment of the local population in areas particularly affected by the presence of large numbers of refugees and internally displaced persons. The project formulated by this mission thus addresses, among other problems, the preoccupation of the Somali Government with the impact of refugees on long-term national development.

F. United Nations Development Programme

25. The resident representative in Somalia also serves as the United Nations Special Coordinator for Emergency Relief Operations, responsible for the coordination of all United Nations relief efforts. He is assisted in this work by a United Nations Emergency Unit, staffed by UNDP staff members and financed to date by IPF funds and by special donations from the Governments of Canada and the United States of America.

26. From February to August 1990, the Special Coordinators coordinated the Extraordinary Interim Emergency Programme in northern Somalia. This special programme of the Secretary-General was created in conjunction with UNHCR and WFP to provide food and non-food aid to refugees when security and other constraints had made the regular operations of these agencies in northern Somalia impossible.

27. Further information on UNDP activities in Somalia is provided in the report of the Secretary-General on emergency assistance to Somalia (A/46/457).

28. Severe security problems led to the suspension of all United Nations operations in Somalia in January 1991. Subsequently, they were resumed on a limited scale in August 1991.